

Fools in The House

and your little slave, how vulgar and hypocritical, how full of stupid vanity and—and—

PERFECT LOVE:
Unfounded pride?

MADMAN:
Please excuse me, mistress. It was so many years ago. Pardon me this once, this once, please.

[The SHOP ASSISTANT kneels in supplication. Slowly, the other WOMEN kneel down. Finally, the little SLAVE GIRL kneels.]

PERFECT LOVE:
I will pardon you this once, but you must promise never to do the like again.

MADMAN:
O mistress, Perfect Love, I kneel in your protection and look for deliverance at your hands.

PERFECT LOVE:
I have already thought of that. Since I'm the one who caught you, it is only right that I should set you free.

MADMAN:
But how? I've signed a contract—

PERFECT LOVE:
Listen carefully, and you will soon be free of that unfortunate girl. First, you must go to the foot of the citadel and call together all the

acrobats, quacks, idiots, dancers, rope walkers, tambourines, cymbals, clarinets, and funny men that you find there. Then you must go back to the house of Sheikh al-Islam . . .

[PERFECT LOVE *departs*; SHEIKH AL-ISLAM *comes forward*. The FOOLS *are approaching in the distance*.]

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

I must say I never expected my daughter to find such happiness.

MADMAN:

She is happiness itself.

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

You see her mother was frightened by a fire and delivered her before her time.

MADMAN:

She was delivered in perfect time for me.

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

Well, I really must say that I never expected—did you hear something?

MADMAN:

No.

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

Well, as I was saying—

[The FOOLS *enter with great fanfare*. They shout, tumble, run about, piss on the floor, and generally misbehave.]

PRINCE OF FOOLS:

Greetings, Sheikh al-Islam! May Allah's blessing be upon you! In the name of all your new family, I wish you prosperity!

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM [*outraged*]:

Who are these people?

PRINCE OF FOOLS [*to the MADMAN*]:

O Cousin, know that we will never, ever desert you!

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

You know these people?

PRINCE OF FOOLS:

And as you have made this your new home, so it is ours as well. Forever and ever and ever and ever!

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

Are you the son of a quack? Are these vile gypsies kin to you?

MADMAN:

Because I love your daughter and her honor, I cannot deny my birth and family. Blood remembers blood. Now, come on! Let's do the family dance!

FOOLS:

The family dance!

[*They dance madly, stupidly.*]

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

Young man! Your marriage contract is illegal! You falsified your parentage!

MADMAN:

Let's do the family dance!

[*They dance.*]

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

No, we will not do the family dance! You cannot remain in the house of Sheikh al-Islam! You cannot remain married to my daughter!

MADMAN:

Oh, no! I have won her and will not divorce her for all the kingdom of Iraq!

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

You shall divorce her!

MADMAN:

But every one of her hairs is more precious to me than a thousand lives!

FOOLS:

The family dance!

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM [pleading]:

Please. Protect my honor, and Allah will surely protect yours.

MADMAN:

By Allah! I will not remain in the home of one who does not love my family. Here, in front of witnesses, I put away your daughter. I put her away once, twice, three times!

SHEIKH AL-ISLAM:

And thus an end to this unfortunate business!